

Town Center Overlay District Guidelines



THE CITY OF
West Des Moines®

Adopted on January 6, 2003

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- 1.1 TITLE:** This chapter shall be known and may be cited and referred to as the Town Center Overlay District.
- 1.2 INTERPRETATION OF GUIDELINES:** The Town Center Guidelines contained herein are an overlay zoning district. They shall operate in conjunction with any underlying zoning district in the subject area. The regulations of the underlying zoning district, and all other applicable regulations, remain in effect. If provisions of the Town Center Overlay District Guidelines conflict with the underlying zoning, the Town Center Overlay District Guidelines shall prevail.
- 1.3 OVERALL OBJECTIVE:** To have a village atmosphere that is a safe, convenient, energetic and attractive live, work and play environment through the integration of uses and eclectic architecture.
- 1.4 INTENT:** The intent of the Town Center Overlay District is:
- A. Public Space – To preserve, enhance, or create many forms of publicly accessible open space, such as parks, plazas, water features, tree-lined streets and community gathering areas.
 - B. Compact Mixed Use – To create a compact concentration of land uses within each development through multiple uses in a single building, or in the same general area.
 - C. Street Activity – To encourage a sense of place through street level activity by allowing the imaginative and efficient utilization of land and to develop a sense of community by promoting year-round pedestrian and outdoor activities at the street level.
 - D. Pedestrian Oriented – To reduce the dependence upon and dominance of the automobile through street design, shared parking, pedestrian scaled buildings and pedestrian pathways and spaces.
 - E. Design – To achieve a unique aesthetic design through high quality architecture and construction with attention to placement, relationship and orientation of structures to provide a greater compatibility with surrounding land uses.

AREA DEVELOPMENT PLAN: A plan that identifies infrastructure, planning units, major street patterns, drainage and detention, utilities, shared public spaces, vehicular traffic impacts, proposed density and land use assumptions for geographically designated areas within the Town Center Overlay District (See 6.2 – Area Development Plan Map). It encourages cohesive, unified development, and identifies the phasing of construction by creating partnerships with the adjacent property owners and developers.

BUFFER: A combination of horizontal space (land) and vertical elements (plants, berm, fences and walls) used to physically separate or visually screen incompatible adjacent land use.

COMMUNITY USE: Administrative and legislative government offices, schools, postal facilities, cultural facilities (such as libraries and museums), meeting halls, clubhouses, amphitheaters, band shells and pavilions.

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: The West Des Moines Director of Community Development or their designee.

ECLECTIC: Composed of elements from a variety of sources, systems, materials or styles.

FAÇADE ARTICULATION: The interruption of the building façade through the use of awnings, arches, display windows or other elements which presents a pedestrian scale.

LANDSCAPE AMENITIES: Living or non-living materials used to augment the beauty or useability of a landscaped area. Amenities may include, but are not limited to: additional vegetation, flower gardens, tables, sculptures, monuments, benches, gardens, banners, enhanced pavement, pedestrian plaza areas, fountains and planters.

LANDSCAPE ISLANDS: A raised unpaved area located within or protruding into a parking lot or the center unpaved area of a cul-de-sac or traffic circle. The area of a landscape island is measured from the back of the inside curb to the back of inside curb.

LANDSCAPE POD: A small individual unpaved area within a parking lot incorporated to provide locations for vegetation, thus increasing the aesthetic quality of the parking lot.

LANDSCAPING UNIT: A calculation or measurement tool used to break a specific landscape area into smaller increments based upon a pre-determined number of square or linear feet.

LIVE/WORK UNITS: A units which offers both a studio work environment and a living environment. The work environment must be primarily involved in the artistic crafts, offices or service uses with minimum impacts on surrounding neighborhood, such as self-employed consultants, researchers, or artists.

MAIN ENTRANCE: That entrance of the building which is most architecturally prominent and contains operable doors.

MIXED-USE: A single building containing two or more types of land use; or a single development of more than one building and use, where the different types of land uses are in close proximity, planned as a unified complementary whole, and functionally integrated to the use of shared vehicular and pedestrian access and parking areas.

NEO-TRADITIONAL: Developments that favor the return of pre-World War II patterns of development with such traditional features as grid-street patterns, reduced setbacks, prominent front porches, multi-use buildings and housing clustered near commercial service areas.

OPEN SPACE: That portion of a site required by the zoning regulation to be maintained as open or 'green' space. Open space areas shall be free of any structures and off-street parking areas.

OPACITY: The degree to which something is opaque or see-thru.

OPACITY DEGREE: An imaginary vertical plane extending from the established grade to a required height, which will be visually obscured to deferring levels of opaqueness through the positioning of obstructions between the viewing point and the viewed object.

OVERLAY DISTRICT: Districts which are placed “over” the base zoning to modify the development guidelines and to achieve a specific purpose for that area. The regulations of the underlying zoning district and all other regulations, remain in effect. If any regulations conflict with the underlying zoning, the Overlay guidelines prevail.

PARAPET: A low, solid, protective screening or decorative wall; often used around a balcony, or along the edge of a roof to screen roof equipment.

PEDESTRIAN-STYLE/SCALE OR PEOPLE-SCALED: The establishment of appropriate proportions for building mass and features in relation to pedestrians and the surrounding context.

PLACE-MAKING: Distinct features, such as parks, plazas or civic areas which connect residents with a community and promote positive user interaction.

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT: A planned combination of diverse land uses, such as housing, recreation and shopping, in one contained development or subdivision.

PLANNING UNITS: Parcels of land uses, such as mixed use or single family that are determined during the review of the Area Development Plan and further defined during the review of the Specific Plan.

SNOUT HOUSES: Houses designed with the garages closest to the street, which presents them as the dominant façade feature.

SPECIFIC PLAN: A zoning ordinance for a specific area, produced through a creative design process which outlines detailed development criteria such as density, architectural building details, useable open space, traffic and streetscape details for each planning unit as identified in the Area Development Plan.

STREETSCAPE: A combination of vegetation, amenities and special visual features along either side of vehicular travel lanes for the purpose of aesthetics or shade.

STREETSCAPE FURNITURE: Amenities, such as benches, lighting and trash receptacles which help to carry out the developments chosen theme.

TRAVEL WAY: A pedestrian or automotive path.

USEABLE OPEN SPACE: Areas which serve the need for leisure, recreation or pedestrian interaction. Spaces may include, but are not limited to, plaza areas, open lawn areas, trails, recreation facilities, gardens, pedestrian walkways and waterways.

VEHICLE USE AREA: The area of a development subject to vehicle traffic, including access ways, loading and service areas, areas used for parking or storage of vehicles, boats or portable construction equipment and all land which vehicles cross over as a function of the primary use.

Area Development Plan

A plan that identifies infrastructure, planning units, major street patterns, drainage and detention, utilities, shared public spaces, vehicular traffic impacts, proposed density, and land use assumptions. It encourages cohesive, unified development, and identifies the phasing of construction by creating partnerships with the adjacent property owners and developers.

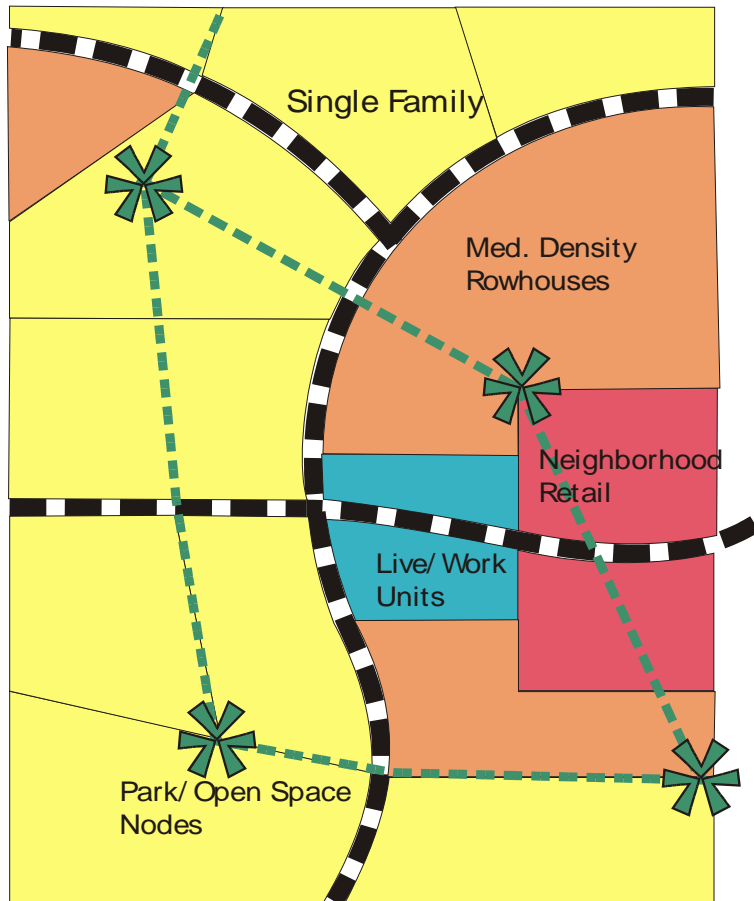


Figure 1 Example of an Area Development Plan

1. An Area Development Plan is required for City designated geographic areas, and is to be completed by the affected land owner(s). (See 6.2 – Area Development Plan Map) If it is determined that owners within each designated area can not feasibly work together to plan for the above stated elements within an area, then, at the discretion of the Director of Community Development, an Area Development Plan will be required for only the portion of the property which is under a single owner. In those situations, the first Area Development Plan in the process will be required to provide all required elements on their property and also show how infrastructure will connect to adjoining property. Subsequent Area Development Plans will be required to meet all existing and proposed connections for infrastructure. In situations of conflict between adjoining property owners, each owner will submit their own Area Development Plan. The Area Development Plan which is determined by the City Council to best serve the greater community and meets the intent of the Overlay District will determine placement of infrastructure.
2. The Area Development Plan may run concurrently (see 6.3 - Flow Chart) through the Development Process with the Specific Plan.
3. The applicant for an Area Development Plan is required to schedule a pre-development meeting with City staff through the Community Development Department to review the development proposal, prior to formal submittal of the Area Development Plan.
4. The Area Development Plan must receive approval from the City Council after receiving a recommendation from the Plan and Zoning Commission. The Area Development Plan may only be amended with the approval of the City Council after receiving a recommendation from the Plan and Zoning Commission. (See 6.3 - Flow Chart)
5. The Area Development Plan must comply with the Comprehensive Plan and West Side Land Use Visioning Study. However, the mixture of uses is encouraged (see 5.1- Mixed Use Guidelines) and therefore the land use designation boundaries of the West Side Land Use Visioning Study may be altered within the Area Development Plan provided that the total acreage of each designated land use is not exceeded. The City Council will have final approval on any land use designation boundary changes.

Specific Plan Ordinance

A Specific Plan Ordinance identifies detailed development criteria for each planning unit as identified in the Area Development Plan.

1. The applicant shall prepare language for the standards of development for each planning unit. The Specific Plan should include, but is not limited to, standards for setbacks, density, parking, buffers, usable outdoor space, architectural standards and details, street furniture amenities and landscaping.
 - a. The Specific Plan Ordinance must meet the intent of the Town Center Overlay District and must be consistent with the corresponding Area Development Plan.
 - b. The Preliminary Platting for the planning unit may run concurrently with the review of the Specific Plan.
 - c. The Specific Plan must receive approval from the City Council after receiving a recommendation from the Plan and Zoning Commission.



Figure 2 Example of a Specific Plan

Permitted Use

The site plan shall be required for each structure in accordance with the specific plan.

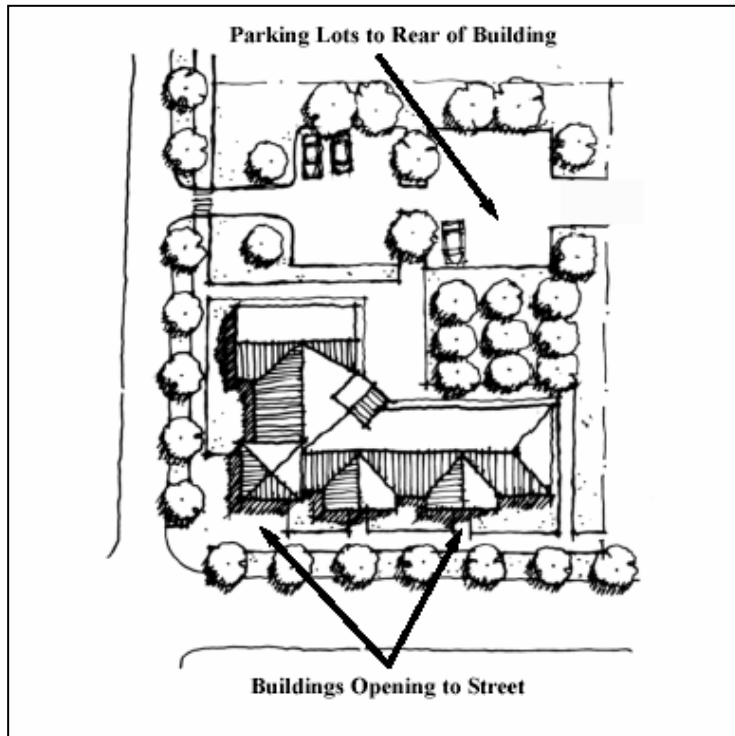
1. The applicant for a permitted use (site plan) submittal is required to schedule a pre-development meeting with City staff through the Community Development Department to review the proposal prior to submittal of the Site Plan. Following the pre-development meeting, the applicant shall submit a site plan in accordance with the requirements of the site plan checklist and any other information determined to be necessary for the review at the development meeting.
2. The site plan shall be distributed to various City departments to ensure the site plan meets the intent of the specific plan. If the site plan is determined by the City Staff to be in compliance with the specific plan, the site plan will be subject to administrative review and approval by the Director of Community Development. If the site is deemed not to be in compliance with the specific plan, the site plan will be subject to review by the appropriate viewing body.
3. Proposed architectural colors and materials examples shall be submitted with the site plan application for all developments within the Overlay District. Residential developments must provide a color palette and materials board for each proposed unit to be built within the development.

Permitted Conditional Use

Permitted Conditional Use Permits must be approved before the Board of Adjustment.

1. The applicant for a Permitted Conditional Use Permit review is required to schedule a pre-development meeting with City staff through the Community Development Department to review the proposal prior to submittal of the Site Plan. Following the pre-development meeting, the applicant shall submit a Permitted Conditional Use Permit Application in accordance with the requirements of the site plan checklist and any other information determined to be necessary for the review at the development meeting.
2. The site plan shall be distributed to various City departments to ensure the site plan meets the intent of the specific plan. The Permitted Conditional Use Permit will be heard before the Board of Adjustment.
3. Proposed architectural colors and materials examples shall be submitted with the site plan application for all developments within the Overlay District. Residential developments must provide a color palette and materials board for each proposed model of home to be built within the development.

Intent: Buildings should be placed to provide a strong street orientation to create a pleasing pedestrian environment



Commercial, Office & Mixed Use Guidelines

1. Those developments which have street frontage on 68th, 74th, E.P. True and Mills Civic Parkway shall provide buffering through enhanced vegetation, berming or landscape features comparable to the perimeter buffering found at the Jordan Creek Town Center.
2. Locate buildings close to the street, with off-street parking behind or beside the building.
2. Free-standing, single use buildings which are not a part of a larger development are discouraged.
3. Pedestrian circulation should be an integral part of the initial site layout. Organize the site so that the buildings frame and reinforce pedestrian circulation.
4. Buildings should be arranged to create view corridors between pedestrian destinations within and adjacent to the site including building entrances, open space or parks.
5. Developments should provide breaks between buildings at mid-block and should have pedestrian amenities such as walkways, benches, etc.

Residential Guidelines

1. Garage doors shall not be the predominate feature of a home. Garage doors facing the public street shall be setback so as to minimize the dominance of their appearance and provide adequate space between the street or sidewalk and the garage to accommodate additional parking.
2. Single and Multi Family Residences should be placed close to the street to promote interaction with the street, neighborhood and its residents.
3. Single Family homes in a neighborhood should have a varying front setback. For example, homes may have a range of front setbacks.
4. Porches should be made a part of the front façade of single and multi family homes to provide a useable outdoor room and promote "eyes on the street".
5. Second dwelling units are encouraged as outlined in the Specific Plan.



Figure 3



Figure 5

Intent: The Town Center Overlay District should contain uses and buildings with greater intensity and height to produce a concentration of jobs, shops, meeting facilities, residential units, entertainment and restaurants within close proximity to each other.

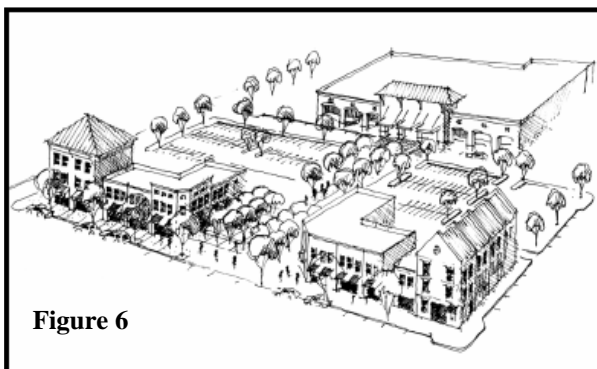


Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

Commercial, Office & Mixed Use Guidelines

1. Streets are encouraged to be in a grid design to encourage cohesive connections to adjoining neighborhoods and retail centers.
2. The corners of street intersections, particularly gateways and site entries, should be distinguished by special landscape or architectural treatments such as:
 - Flower displays,
 - Accent rocks,
 - Decorative lighting,
 - Outdoor art,
 - Vertical architectural elements,
 - Special paving.
3. Each development shall provide a complete network of paths or open spaces that interconnect building entrances, parking, sidewalks, adjacent properties and other key destinations.
4. Sidewalks in designated areas shall be of a sufficient width to accommodate outdoor seating areas for cafes, pedestrian street furniture, walkways and street trees.
5. Any pedestrian paths which cross internal drives should be constructed to visually contrast to provide a highly visible crosswalk.
6. Each development should provide outdoor lighting fixtures, integrated street pavers or patterns, and landscaping that reinforces the neighborhood theme and identity.
7. All developments should offer exterior and/or interior public spaces appropriate for public gatherings, open air markets, seasonal events, vendor carts and kiosks and other year round activities.
8. Street activities are encouraged through street vendors, markets and festivals. During the review of the Specific Plan, the applicant should identify streets that could potentially be closed periodically

for the promotion of street activities. Those areas are encouraged to be designated with alternative pavements markings or bollards.

9. Enhanced pedestrian elements at the sidewalk level including decorative lighting, seating or low sitting walls, planters, enhanced paving techniques, etc, shall be incorporated into the theme.

Site Design

10. Developments that abut existing developments which are not a part of the Town Center Overlay District, should be designed to respect the surrounding development in order to provide for a transition from the typical development patterns to the new district.



Figure 10



Figure 9

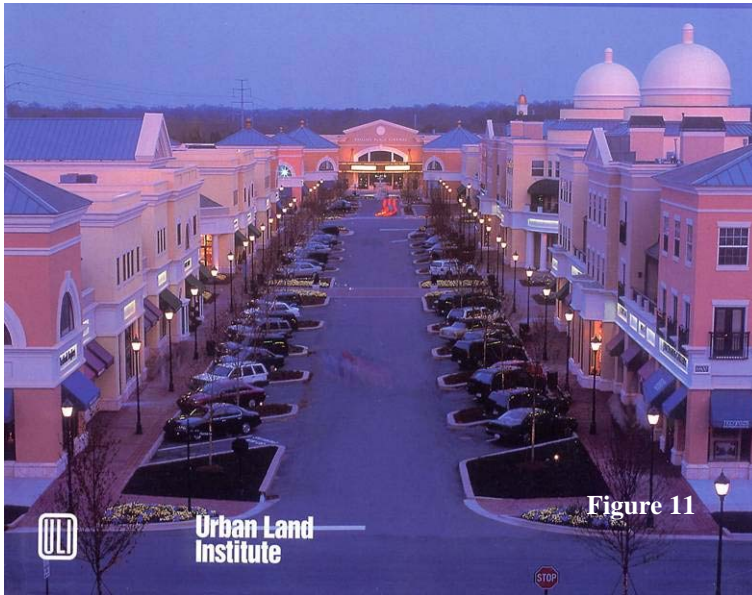


Figure 11

The site plan above is of Phillips Place, a Neo-Traditional development near Charlotte, NC. This site successfully incorporates large retail establishments into the design by putting the parking areas in the rear of the buildings. It also engages pedestrians by turning the development away from the large arterial roadway and creating an internal roadway system. The architecture is a good example of how to break up facades to create unique design elements.

Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14

Residential Guidelines

1. Transition Zones: For the first 350 to 400 feet of single family development along the west side of 60th Street, the design and scale of the residential structures must be compatible in scale and design to properties on the east side of 60th Street. A buffer zone of medium opacity is required along the west side frontage of 60th street for the area designated Single Family on the Comprehensive Plan.
2. A publicly accessible outdoor space such as a private park, plaza, pavilion or courtyard should be included within **each residential development** to provide a focal point for such activities as outdoor gatherings, neighborhood events, picnicking, sitting and passive and active recreation.
3. Multi-Density homes and High Density apartment complexes should have a street orientation through the use of small setbacks, balconies and porches.
4. High and medium density residential buildings are strongly encouraged to be multi-story.

Site Design

Intent: To create small, shared, aesthetically landscaped and screened parking lots which are designed to function not only in the interest of accommodating automobiles, but in the interest of the pedestrian.

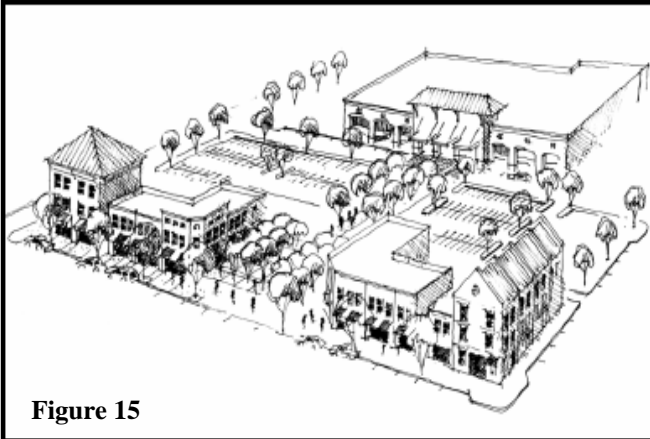


Figure 15

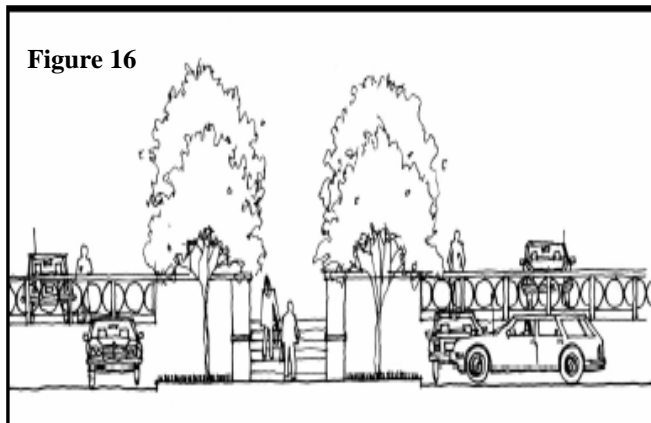


Figure 16

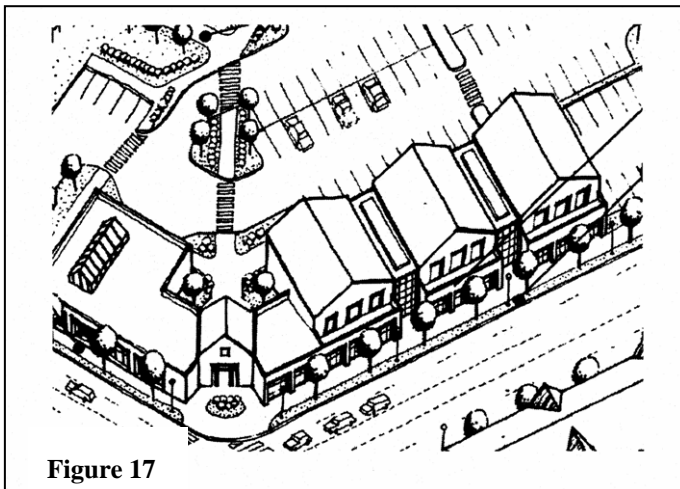


Figure 17

Commercial, Office & Mixed Use Guidelines

1. Parking areas should consist of separated parking fields that are aesthetically pleasing, landscaped to screen the public views and located so as not be the dominant feature along any street or intersection
2. Parking structures and lots should be designed to contribute to an attractive appearance of the streetscape and not deter from the pedestrian orientation of the district.
3. Structured parking may be allowed in front of the building provided that retail, office or residential uses are located on the ground floor abutting all streets and sidewalks.
4. Structured parking should provide pedestrian access to both the street level and multi story residential or retail.
5. Parking requirements will be established at the review of the site's Specific Plan Ordinance.
6. Consideration will be given for the reduction of parking requirements if the applicant can provide data that indicates potential parking demand that is less than the current code. The applicant may use shared parking, on-street parking and off-street parking to reduce the number of required stalls.
7. Parking should be located to utilize natural landscape and topography.
8. To promote a higher level of pedestrian awareness, the use of alternate paving materials to designate pedestrian traffic areas from vehicular use areas and travel lanes is strongly encouraged.
9. The design of all streets, (public or private) and parking lots shall permit the travel of the fire department's vehicle access requirements.
10. Pedestrian travel ways should be separated from vehicular traffic with landscaping, on-street parking, bollards, special paving, or any other feature which identifies the pedestrian space.

Intent: To allow for the creative design of plazas, green spaces and focal elements for retail, office or mixed use developments.

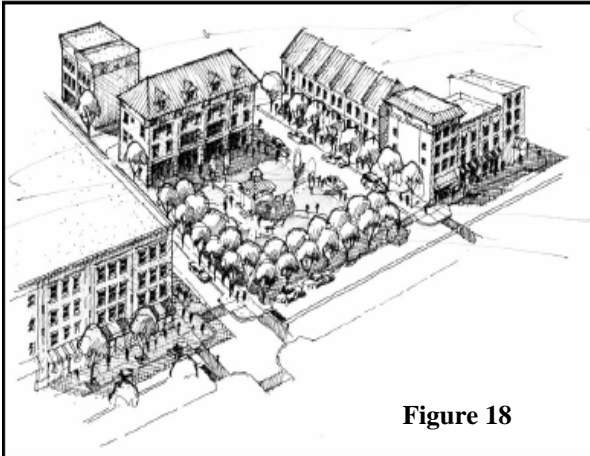


Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20

Guidelines

1. Developments within the Town Center Overlay District shall adhere to the Landscape Ordinance. However, the following guidelines shall be followed when providing open space. All developments shall provide useable open space, or spaces which allow for the interaction among pedestrians and with the surrounding environment.
2. Useable open spaces should be designed to encourage the interaction and presence of people throughout the day and evening.
3. Useable outdoor spaces should provide as many seating opportunities as possible through the placement of moveable chairs, sidewalk cafes and planter walls.
4. Activities, such as street vendors, open air markets, kiosks and festivals are encouraged to promote pedestrian usage.
5. Usable outdoor space shall be privately owned and maintained by the developer or property owners' association. However, if the determination has been made by the City Council that a particular useable open space serves not only the patrons of the development but the greater community as a whole, the City may provide assistance to aid in the development of the public space.
6. When possible, the integration of storm drainage and detention should be designed to enhance the public space, which would include the creation of ponds, waterfalls or landscaped water ways.
7. Useable space should be designed to create an outdoor room, by limiting the interaction with moving vehicles and partially surrounding the space by buildings, landscaping elements and architectural features.
8. All developments should provide outdoor art to enrich the pedestrian experience and create a stronger sense of place.
9. Artwork may be free standing pieces or integrated into its surrounding as architectural relief.

Intent: Building facades should be varied and articulated to provide visual interest to pedestrians. Buildings should be proportioned and defined by clear façade elements such as a base, middle, and top.



Figure 21



Figure 22



Figure 23

Commercial, Office & Mixed Use Guidelines

1. Buildings are encouraged to have a pedestrian scaled design by achieving the following:
 - Using heavier building materials at the bottom of the building,
 - Using roof details such as cornices, caps or parapets at the top of the building,
 - Alternating roof styles, heights and elements,
 - Dormers,
 - Varying window heights and styles,
 - Facade modulation such as window bays,
 - Mix of architectural materials and styles.
2. Fenestration (door and window openings) shall be sized to the scale of the building and detailed appropriately to the pedestrian theme. Use of repeating window patterns and details are encouraged to unify the design.
3. Entrances into buildings should be easily identified through the use of building design and detailing. Projected or recessed entryways, higher rooflines, awnings or changes in building material are examples that can create this effect.
4. Buildings should provide a unifying theme while maintaining each building's individual character.
5. Materials should change with the change in building planes; however, all material should keep within the chosen theme.
6. Reflective glass or mirrored glass is strongly discouraged. Efforts should be made to use clear glass on storefronts, windows and doors to promote the linkage of the interior and exterior of buildings.
7. All sides of all buildings open to public view should be treated with the same level of architectural style.
8. Trim and structural elements such as posts or columns shall be sized to the scale of the building and detailed appropriately to the theme.

When used, masonry materials shall have the appearance of 3-dimensional elements.

9. Corporate franchise design where the building functions as a trademark shall be permissible only if it incorporates architectural elements which are compatible with the overall theme and uniqueness of the development.

Big Box /Large Retail Establishments Requirements

1. It is the intent of the Town Center Overlay District to create a unique pedestrian-oriented environment through mixed uses and pedestrian scaled design. Each large retail establishment is **required** to provide pedestrian scaled design through the incorporation of several of the following suggested elements:
 - arcades
 - arches or recessed archways
 - architectural details such as tile work and moldings which are integrated into the building structure and design
 - awnings, canopies or porticos
 - changes in massing
 - changes in material
 - clearly defined, highly visible, multiple customer entrances
 - display windows
 - dormers
 - peaked roof forms
 - planters, outdoor patios or wing walls that incorporate landscaped areas and/or places for sitting
 - raised corniced parapets over the door(s)
 - separate shops (or the appearance of separate shops) with separate entrances placed in front of the larger building (See Figure 27)
 - varying plate heights.



Figure 24



Figure 25

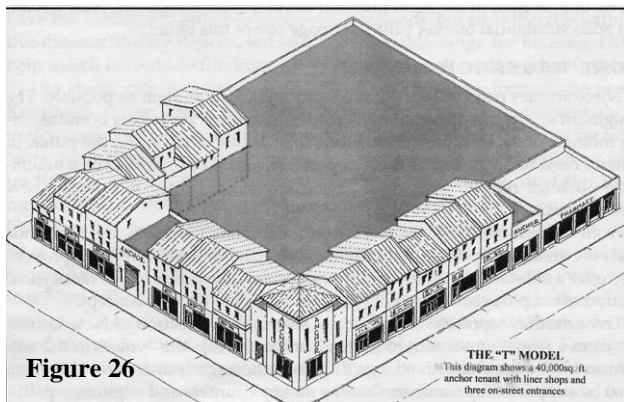


Figure 26

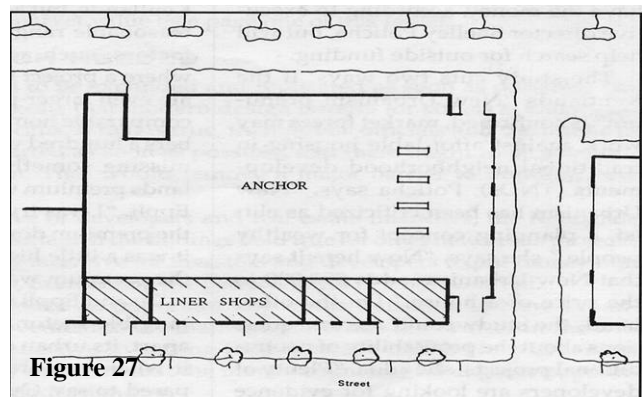


Figure 27

Residential Guidelines



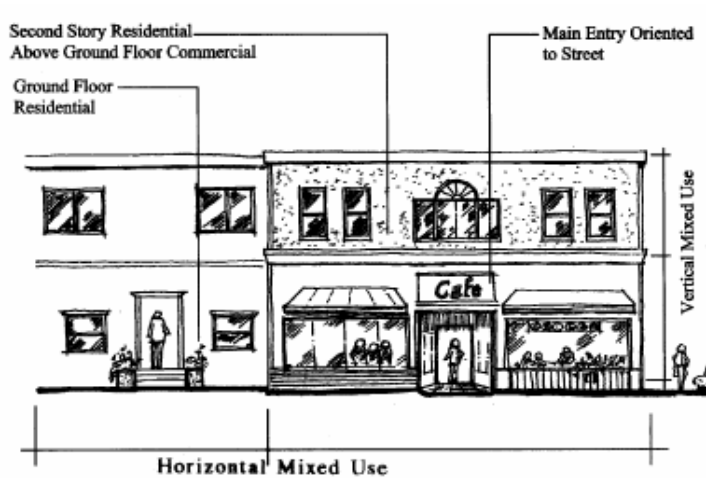
Figure 28



Figure 29

1. Garage doors shall not be the predominate feature of a home. Garage doors facing the public street shall be setback so as to minimize the dominance of their appearance and provide adequate space between the street or sidewalk and the garage to accommodate additional parking.
2. Garages or accessory structures should incorporate architecture details with the use of windows, doors and other façade detailing.
3. Four (4) out of five (5) single family and medium density homes within a development must provide a front porch, covered stoop or balcony. The area must provide a significant useable outdoor area no less than 5 feet in depth, which may extend into the setback, yet may be no closer than five (5) feet to the property line.
4. 80% of multi-family units within a development must provide a balcony of at least five (5) feet deep, which may extend into the setback, yet may be no closer than five (5) feet to the property line.
5. Fenestration (door and window openings) shall be sized to the scale of the building and detailed appropriately to the pedestrian theme. Use of repeating window patterns and details are encouraged to unify the design.
6. Entrances into buildings should be easily identified through the use of building design and detailing. Projected or recessed entryways, higher rooflines, awnings or changes in building material are examples that can create this effect.
7. Buildings should provide a unifying theme while maintaining each building's individual character.
8. Materials should change with the change in building planes; however, all material should keep within the chosen theme.
9. All sides of all buildings open to public view should be treated with the same level of architectural style.

Intent: To encourage the design of mixed use structures to provide an environment that offers office, retail, and residential opportunities. Mixed use buildings or developments should be designed to limit the impacts of traffic, noise, and safety to the surrounding neighborhood.



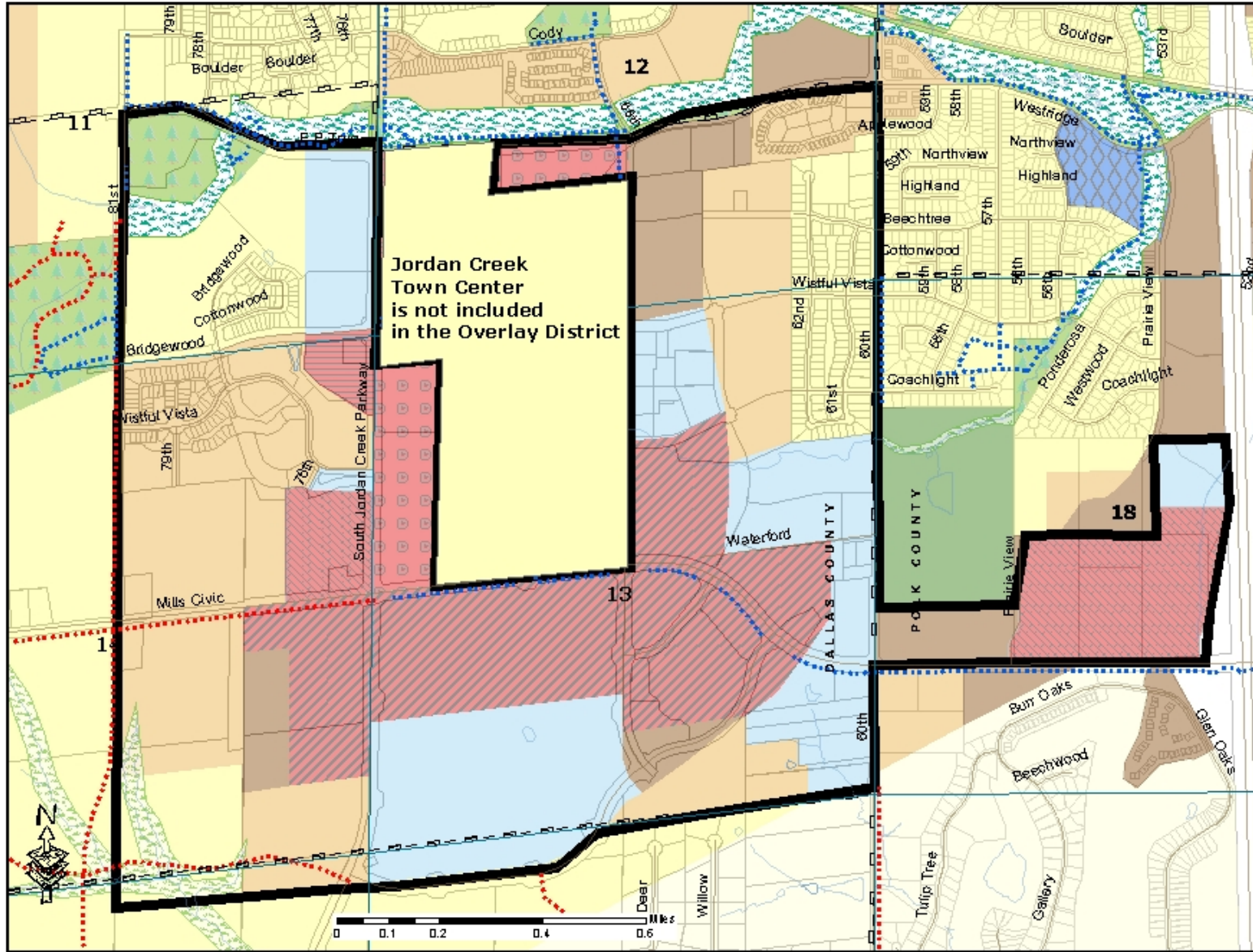
Mixed Use Guidelines

1. Common walls between residential and non-residential uses shall be constructed to minimize the transmission of noise and vibration.
2. Parking and refuse containers must be placed in a convenient location for the residential units of mixed use buildings.
3. Live/work units are encouraged within this district. Live/work units are allowed in office and commercial areas and should be used as a transition between a lesser use areas. The unit must provide a store front to ensure

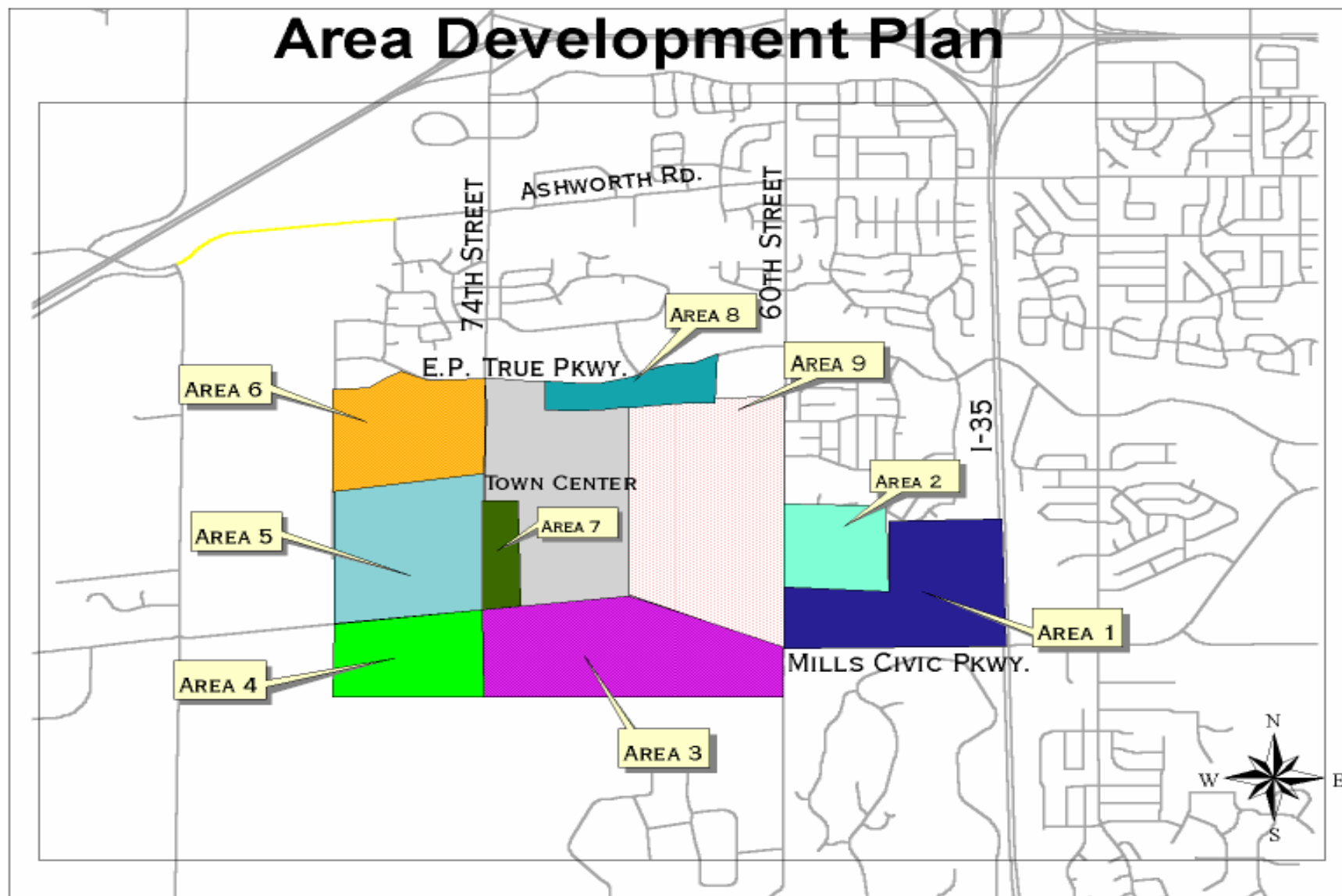
pedestrian connectivity along the street. Allowed uses would be outlined in either the Specific Plan or in a Planned Unit Development Ordinance.

Table 1

Uses	Allowed in/on
High Density Residential	2nd floor & higher of all office and commercially zoned areas
Office	1 st floor & higher of all commercially zoned areas
Commercial	Commercial uses are only allowed in commercially zoned areas



West Des Moines Town Center Overlay District Boundary



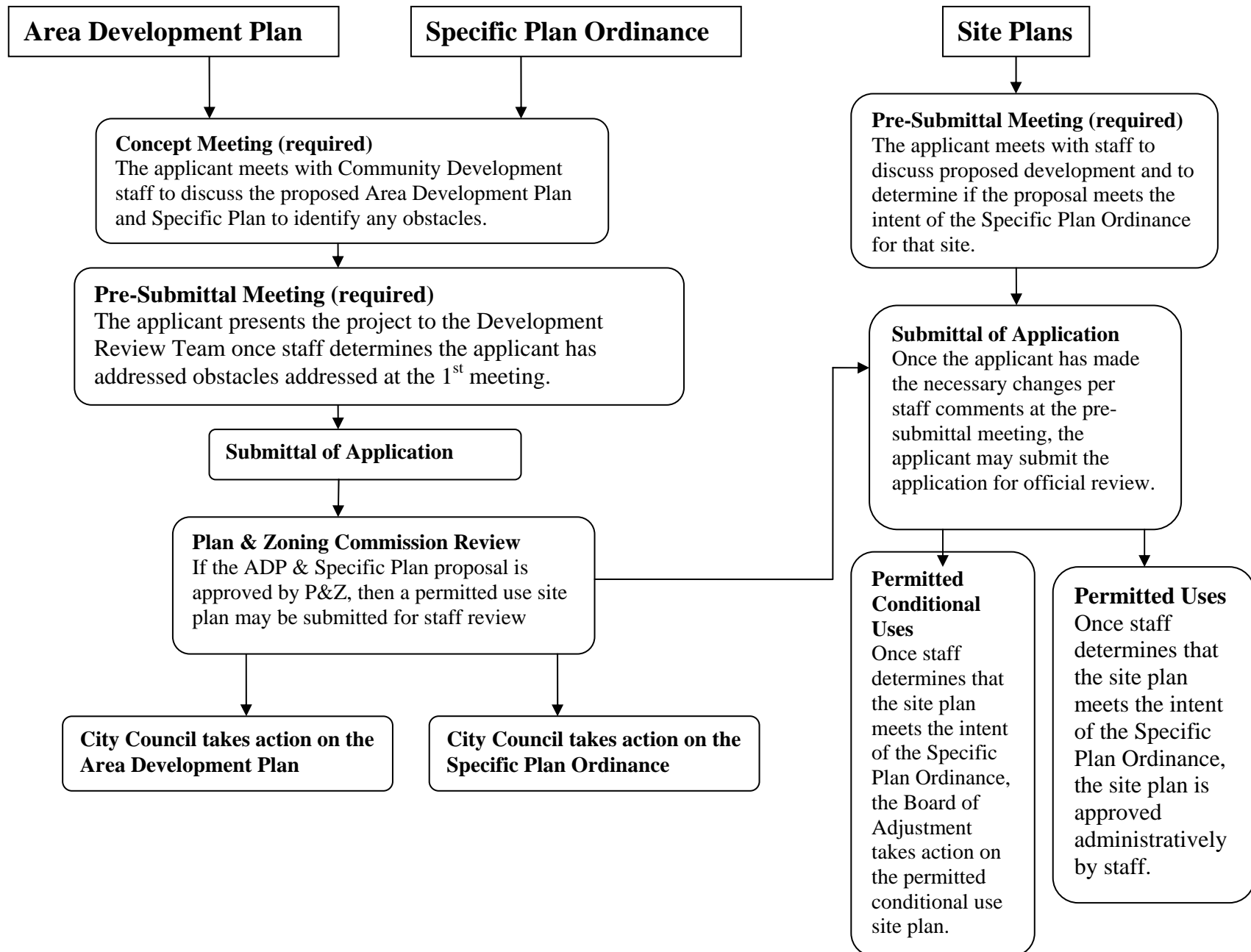


Figure 1	Drawing from the City of Raleigh, NC Urban Design Guidelines
Figure 2	The Avenue at White Marsh – Baltimore, MD
Figure 3	Laguna West – Sacramento County, California
Figure 4	Drawing from the City of Raleigh, NC Urban Design Guidelines
Figure 5	The Market Commons Clarendon – Arlington, VA
Figure 6	The Commons at Calabasas – Los Angeles suburbs
Figure 7	Phillips Place - Charlotte, NC
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Figure 9	Phillips Place - Charlotte, NC
Figure 10	Birkdale Village – Huntersville, NC
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Figure 12	Kentlands – Gaithersburg, MD
Figure 13	Drawing from the City of Raleigh, NC Urban Design Guidelines
Figure 14	Drawing from the City of Raleigh, NC Urban Design Guidelines
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Figure 19	Drawing from the City of Raleigh, NC Urban Design Guidelines
Figure 20	The Commons at Calabasas – Los Angeles suburbs
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Figure 28	Drawing from the City of Raleigh, NC Urban Design Guidelines
Table 1	Allowed Mixed Use Development Locations